

The recent democratic uprisings in Tunisia, Bahrain, Egypt, and now Libya have demonstrated that individuals of different faiths, ethnicities, and nationalities can thirst for self-determination just as our Founding Fathers did over two hundred years ago. Although democratic reforms must also ultimately include the protection of individual rights and a commitment to the rule of law, I welcome their call for a voice in the selection of their leaders. As the *New York Times* reported this week, these uprisings could also deal a severe blow to al Qaeda’s vision of a network of terrorist states in the Middle East and neighboring regions. Indeed, I believe that the spread of freedom is one of the most effective weapons against terrorism.

Of course, such substantial changes in governments are not without risk, and firm American leadership is critical to encouraging outcomes that are favorable to our security interests. In Egypt, I believe the Administration must strongly emphasize to that nation’s future leaders that they should renounce terrorism and fully embrace the peace treaty with Israel that has endured for decades and has promoted stability in the region. Meanwhile, I’m concerned by the Administration’s late and uncertain response to the current uprising in Libya. The President did not promptly denounce Gaddafi’s violent retaliation against democratic protestors, reminiscent of his tepid and uninspiring response to the bold [uprising in Iran](#) in 2009. Moving forward, I believe the Administration must speak forcefully and with clarity in support of the protestors in Libya, and be prepared to encourage a potential new government there to fight against jihadists while committing to democratic reforms.